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S E C R E T CHENGDU 000140

DEPT FOR EAP/CM, DRL, G, INR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 25X1 - HUMAN
TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR CH
SUBJECT: SECURITY CRACKDOWN IN CHENGDU'S "TIBET TOWN"

REF: A. CHENGDU 135 (NOTAL)
1B. CHENGDU 85 (NOTAL)

CLASSIFIED BY: James A. Boughner, Consul General, U.S. Consulate General, Chengdu.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (S) Summary: Following several days of a progressively escalating People's Armed Police (PAP) presence in a Tibetan area of downtown Chengdu, a large-scale security sweep was conducted the evening of June 25. A growing floating population of ethnic Tibetans in the city, including monks who have fled a "patriotic education campaign" currently underway in western Sichuan Province, may have precipitated the crackdown. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Security patrols in Chengdu's "Tibet Town," located near a major downtown tourist center, were stepped up several days ago with the arrival of the Olympic torch in Lhasa. Cars were not allowed to stop on streets in the area. One ethnic Tibetan described to us when he tried to park in "Tibet Town" on June 21 how he was immediately confronted by a uniformed security officer cradling an automatic weapon who yelled, "Go, you can't stop here."

¶3. (S) At approximately 9:00 pm on June 25, PAP officers cordoned off "Tibet Town." They stopped people on the street, checked identification cards, and searched cars. Owners of small hotels, who reportedly were tipped off the previous day that a security crackdown was being planned, closed their establishments ahead of time and left the area. According to one contact (a Han Chinese security official from western Sichuan currently visiting Chengdu), the PAP may have been searching for specific individuals wanted in the province's Tibetan Autonomous Prefectures of either Ganzi or Aba.

¶4. (C) An ethnic Tibetan legally resident in Chengdu told us he was visited by security officers at his apartment at 10 pm on June 25, just after receiving two guests from Gansu Province. The security officers checked IDs and searched every room of the apartment. The security officers, who could not speak Tibetan, told the Gansu residents they needed to register with the police as temporary visitors. One of the visitors was from a remote herding district of Gansu and did not have a PRC national ID card. He was told he would need to do that immediately in Chengdu. The security officers loitered outside the apartment for several hours, perhaps to see if extra people would emerge.

¶5. (S) Comment: The recent crackdown on the Tibetan floating population of Chengdu may have occurred because many monks have reportedly gone into hiding in the city to escape the "patriotic education campaign" now underway in monasteries in western Sichuan (reflets). Up to 100,000 Tibetans may reside in Chengdu at any given time, including many retired government and party cadres.

BOUGHNER